



Better Skills for Life support through teamwork

■ Paula Hayes, Director of Quality, Training Plus Merseyside

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Training Plus Merseyside is a provider of vocational training to young people aged 14–24. Situated in the heart of Liverpool, the company specialises in Apprenticeship Frameworks in the areas of Childcare, Hairdressing, and Business Administration, with around 300 young people on programmes at any one time. Most clients are in employment and as part of their programme spend half a day at the training centre, where those with Skills for Life (SfL) needs receive an additional 50-minute session of literacy and numeracy support at the start or end of the day. The company has a highly committed staff of 34, including two Skills for Life tutors.

At the start of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme (SfLIP), Training Plus Merseyside had already made progress in embedding Skills for Life. Over a year ago all vocational staff attended a course in embedding. As a result, staff have become more aware of SfL issues, but still require support in identifying SfL needs and knowing which approaches and resources to use. The key to further progress in embedding is to get the vocational and SfL staff working more closely.

The SfLIP is supporting us

in meeting this challenge through involvement in a Quality Improvement cluster group and Good Practice cluster for coaching and mentoring. As part of the support, we also have regular individual meetings with the Development Advisers for the two clusters. Our first task was to agree an action plan and set up a SfL working group, consisting of key vocational staff from the three occupational areas, the Quality Improvement manager, Quality Director and two SfL tutors, to take the work forward.

Progress

Schemes of work and session plans

For many of the trainers, identifying where SfL fits into a vocational session can be difficult. The SfL working team has therefore been collecting the schemes of work and session plans to identify further opportunities for embedding SfL. The team has also been looking at resources. The idea is to create a resource library and then share the information with other teaching staff so that they know which SfL resources are available.

Partnership teaching

The company has recently recruited a second SfL tutor. This has given Training Plus



Success factors

- Have a small working group of key staff to take forward improvements you want to make, not just one person.
- Ensure that all members of the group are available for all meetings.
- Include somebody from the top who is committed to Skills for Life and the changes you want to make.
- When it gets difficult, keep remembering that the learner is going to benefit from the improvements.

Merseyside the capacity to improve its SfL support in the vocational sessions as well as in the separate SfL sessions. The two tutors have been timetabled so that they can observe vocational classes to identify missed opportunities for integrating SfL and suggest appropriate teaching activities and resources. In some cases, they also team-teach the SfL elements of the session, for example, a SfL tutor might teach ratios during a vocational session that includes mixing a baby's bottle. This way of working is proving to be powerful and means there is a SfL slant in all the vocational sessions.

SfL tutor Carol Fleming explains: 'For the classes that I have been in it is working well. Natalie (the Childcare trainer) and I get together before the session to see what is on the lesson plan and whether I have resources that would benefit the lessons, for example percentile charts.'

Having two fully qualified tutors in a session doubles the cost, but provides huge benefits for learners, helping them to see the relevance of SfL and realise its importance for the NVQ.

Induction process

We have also revised our induction processes to

ensure that trainers and assessors have access to full information about a learner's needs before they meet the learner. After carrying out the initial assessment, time is allocated at the Friday staff meeting for the SfL tutor to talk through the learner's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with vocational staff. For those learners identified as having Additional Learning Needs (ALN) or Additional Social Needs (ASN), a separate case conference is held on a Friday with the assessor, trainer and SfL tutor to discuss the learner's ILP. The result is that everybody in the team understands the learner's specific needs and can start to plan necessary support. At the same time, a new ILP has been designed that will provide fuller SfL information for trainers and assessors: this is currently being piloted.

Next plans

By the end of August our expectation is that:

- the new ILP that we are piloting will be in general use for every learner
- all schemes of work and lesson plans will be updated to show that SfL is fully integrated
- partnership teaching will be well established.

Photos

1. & 3. Learners in a Communication Skills session
2. Paula Hayes, Quality Director, Training Plus Merseyside
4. Trainee hairdressers with Assessor Anita Jones, at the Voodoo hair salon, Liverpool

In the article about Bromley College in Newsletter 2, we incorrectly used a photograph from Training Plus Merseyside. We apologise for this misrepresentation.